

**SUMMARY OF THE
NELAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
APRIL 25, 2000**

The Board of Directors of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference at 2:30 p.m. on April 25, 2000. The meeting was lead by Dr. Jim Pearson, chair. The list of action items is given in Attachment A; the list of participants is shown in Attachment B.

FUTURE NELAC RELATIONS WITH EPA

Ms. Jeanne Hankins introduced Mr. David Friedman of the US EPA Office of Research and Development (ORD) to discuss issues relevant to the future effective functioning of NELAC, particularly the relationships between EPA and NELAC. Mr. Friedman explained that the letter from the Board requesting a meeting with Deputy Administrator McCabe has been delegated to Dr. Noreene Noonan, ORD Assistant Administrator as ORD has responsibility for NELAC. He noted that Dr. Noonan deems such a meeting useful only if this board has articulated its vision and options for future funding for NELAC. He noted that EPA is faced with increasing demands on its increasingly limited resources and is being forced to explore all available options open to it. He noted that EPA intends to maintain a role in NELAC, that he is aware of general support for NELAC within EPA, but it does not extend to supplying funding. Mr. Friedman emphasized that he was not representing an EPA position, but his comments as an observer.

EPA Role in NELAC

The issue of the role in NELAC that EPA desires was discussed. Mr. Friedman stated that EPA still wants to participate in standards development process, however it anticipates being unable to maintain its financial support to the Conference. A board member noted that the letter explicitly requested that EPA state its desired role; however, Mr. Friedman indicated that EPA is awaiting NELAC's specification of that role. In response to a question about the sense of EPA's Laboratory Accreditation Workgroup, Mr. Friedman stated that he has not yet convened this workgroup following EPA's recent reorganization.

EPA Funding of NELAC

Discussion on EPA's future role in NELAC revolved around funding. The issue of EPA's contributions (ca. \$500K/yr) with respect to those of the States and other stakeholders (ca. \$1.6M/yr), both in direct expenses and in-kind contributions were discussed.

Accreditation Model Options

The possibility of accreditation models other than the one being implemented in NELAC was raised. Specifically, the consensus standard model of ASTM and the hospital accreditation model of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). Board members noted that these models had been explicitly considered and rejected prior to the focused development of NELAC

standards for many reasons. Conflict of interest has been raised as an issue by legal counsel, lack of enabling legislation and funding, and the intensive federal oversight and funding of the hospital accreditation program was rejected as impractical in the regulatory context of environmental data generation. Additionally, there is the question of rulings by both OMB and EPA/OGC on funding sources external to EPA; historically, this has been ruled out by both organizations.

It was noted that the current roles and responsibilities of NELAC stakeholders, including EPA's, has been carefully crafted over the years, and is stated in Chapter One of the NELAC Standards. Mr. Friedman expressed his unawareness of these considerations and requested that a one-page summary be prepared by the Board for his review.

It was also noted that NELAC (the Conference) has different needs than NELAP (the accreditation program, implemented by the accrediting authorities). This involves a delicate balance among regulators and the regulated community, between State and federal responsibilities. Hence, any changes to the NELAC model must consider the implications, not just for EPA, but for other stakeholders with regulatory responsibilities.

Next Meeting

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting of this board is scheduled for May 4, 2000.

**ACTION ITEMS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
APRIL 25, 2000**

| No | Item | Date to Complete |
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| 1 | The Board will send Mr. Friedman a one-page comparison of various accreditation programs (including university accreditation) that have been considered in the development of NELAC. | |

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
APRIL 25, 2000

| Name | Affiliation | Address |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Pearson, James Chair | VA Div. of Consol. Lab Services | T: (804) 786 - 7905 F: (804) 371 - 7973 E: jpearson@dgs.state.va.us |
| Brokopp, Charles | UT Department of Health | T: (801) 584 - 8450 F: (801) 584 - 8486 E: cbrokopp@doh.state.ut.us |
| Cada, Ronald | Colorado Dept. of Public Health & Env. | T: (303) 692 - 3096 F: (303) 344 - 9989 E: ron.cada@state.co.us |
| Davies, Marcia (invited) | US Army Corps of Engineers | T: (402) 697 - 2555 F: (402) 697 - 2595 E: marcia.c.daview@usace.army.mil |
| Doucet, Lisa Executive Secretary | USEPA/OEI | T: (202) 564 - 1416 F: (202) 565 - 2441 E: doucet.lisa@epa.gov |
| Finazzo, Barbara | USEPA/Region 2 | T: (732) 321 - 6754 F: (732) 321 - 4381 E: finazzo.barbara@epamail.epa.gov |
| Friedman, David (invited) | USEPA | T: (202) 564 - 6662 F: (202) 565 - 2432 E: friedman.david@epa.gov |
| Hankins, Jeanne Director | USEPA/ORD | T: (919) 541 - 1120 F: (919) 541 - 4261 E: hankins.jeanne@epa.gov |
| Jackson, Kenneth | New York State Dept. of Health | T: (518) 485 - 5570 F: (518) 485 - 5568 E: jackson@wadsworth.org |
| Kimsey, Paul (absent) | CA State, Department of Health Services | T: (510) 540 - 2411 F: (510) 540 - 3075 E: pkimsey@dhs.ca.gov |
| Labie, Sylvia | FL Dept. of Environmental Protection | T: (850) 488 - 2796 F: (850) 922 - 4614 E: labie_s@dep.state.fl.us |
| Rhyne, Anne | TX Nat. Res. Conserv. Comm. | T: (512) 239 - 1291 F: (512) 239 - 6410 E: arhyne@tnrcc.state.tx.us |
| Sample, Jackie | US Navy/US Dept of Defense | T: (843) 764 - 7337 F: (843) 764 - 7360 E: SampleJH@navsea.navy.mil |
| Siegelman, Fred (invited) | USEPA/OEI | T: (202) 564 - 5173 F: (202) 565 - 2441 E: siegelman.frederic@epamail.epa.gov |
| Tatsch, Gene (Contractor Support) | Research Triangle Institute | T: (919) 541 - 6930 F: (828) 628 - 0659 E: cet@rti.org |